

Maasai Mara Game Reserve (1°17S, 35°03E)

28 August 1987: over 100 seen.

9 December 1988: none present.

Lake Nakuru National Park (0°22S, 36°05E)

19 September 1988: over 50 seen.

2 November 1988: 50 seen.

7 December 1988: none seen.

Nairobi National Park (1°17S, 36°49E)

25 October 1988: several flocks of *c.* 20 birds each.

These observations show that flocks of Banded Martins are present in the August–November period, but are virtually dispersed by December. A total of 490 have been ringed in East Africa (Backhurst 1988)—most of them between late July and late October at Lake Nakuru (G.C. Backhurst, pers. comm.). Three breeding records from central and western Kenya are March, May and July (EANHS Nest Record cards). Sessions (1966) found the species mainly as a February–July visitor to Mau Narok (0°41S, 35°57E), breeding in June. Thus the flocks reported here seem to occur in the non-breeding season.

References

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August and October arrivals of the Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* in south west Kenya

Caspian Plovers *Charadrius asiaticus* are common during the northern autumn and winter on the short grass plains between the Mara River and Mara Buffalo Camps in the north of the Maasai Mara Game Reserve, Kenya (1°11S, 35°06E). These upland plains form the northern limits of one of this plover's two main wintering areas in Africa (Urban *et al.* 1986). This note discusses fluctuations in the Caspian Plover's abundance on the Mara plains as observed during frequent visits in the years 1986 to 1988.

Britton (1980) and Urban *et al.* (1986) both make the point that flocks of this species reach Kenya during early August each year, but that the main arrival does not take place until October.

What is not clear from these accounts is the magnitude of the August arrival. During the second half of the month, counts over an area of some 30 km² in the vicinity of the Mara River and Mara Buffalo Camps can exceed 1000 individuals. The great majority, if not

all, of these birds leave the area during the first half of September, presumably moving further south. Additional arrivals occur in the October–November period, with continuing presence on the plains through to February and March. Counts of the birds wintering on this 30 km² area can reach 400.

These fluctuations compare exactly with the data of Nikolaus (1987) from Sudan, where there is a distinct August passage along the Nile, prior to the arrival of wintering birds in October.

The August and October arrivals presumably represent two, separately migrating populations. Since this plover leaves its breeding grounds in August, these first arrivals in Africa would seem to have made a direct, unbroken flight (Cramp & Simmons 1983). August arrivals are known from Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, south to Zambia and southern Africa (Nikolaus 1987, Urban *et al.* 1986).

The Caspian Plovers that arrive in Africa during September and October have either left their breeding grounds later than the early August migrants (birds breeding at more southerly latitudes might depart later than those from further north); or have broken their flight in the Middle East. Cramp & Simmons (1983) mention large mid August–October flocks in Iraq.

References

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Two commensal feeding associations observed in Kenya

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* and African Buffalo *Syncerus caffer*

On 16 November 1987, while driving around the swamps of Amboseli National Park (2°30S, 37°00E), I came upon an African Buffalo wallowing in a mud hole. A Hamerkop was deliberately stalking around the buffalo, catching jumping or flying prey items that the rolling buffalo disturbed. The buffalo paid no attention whatsoever to the bird, even when the latter was only 10–20 cm from its muzzle.

On 24 September 1988, I watched a buffalo crossing Musiara marsh, in the north of the Maasai Mara Game Reserve (1°17S, 35°03E). As it came towards me through the marsh vegetation, a Hamerkop persistently fluttered around it, often immediately around its head, taking food items flushed up by the beast's progress. Again, the mammal paid no attention to the bird.

Standard reference works make no mention of this association, while Dean & MacDonald (1961), in their review of such phenomena, quote one example, of a